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DE RUEHJA #3289/01 3340959
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 300959Z NOV 07
FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7229
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1670
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 2094
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1218
RUEHBAD/AMCONSUL PERTH 0482
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 003289

SIPDIS

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DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/RSP, EAP/MLS, DRL/PHD
NSC FOR EPHU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/30/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SMIG](#) [SOCI](#) [ID](#) [MY](#)

SUBJECT: HOPPING MAD INDONESIANS DEMONSTRATE AGAINST
MALAYSIA

REF: A. JAKARTA 2901

[B](#). JAKARTA 2394

[C](#). JAKARTA 2825

Classified By: Pol/C Joseph Legend Novak, reasons 1.4(b-d).

[1](#). (C) SUMMARY: Indonesians regularly complain about Malaysia, but emotions have swirled to a new level over claims of infringement of Indonesia's most cherished resource--its culture. Accusing Malaysia of brazenly stealing a traditional East Javan dance, more than a 1,000 demonstrators clamored in front of the Malaysian Embassy in Jakarta on November 29, objecting to use of the dance in a tourist promotion ad. This latest tiff comes on top of widespread outrage over other recent incidents and reflects Indonesia's rising nationalism toward its wealthier neighbor.
END SUMMARY.

TAKING IT TO THE STREETS

[1](#)2. (SBU) Some Indonesians are hopping mad with Malaysia. The thousand-plus protesters who rallied in front of the Malaysian Embassy November 29 donned colorful traditional costumes, danced, and carried signs saying, "Malaysia thief!" and "Plagiarism." They were protesting Malaysia's alleged appropriation of a popular East Javanese traditional dance, the "Reog Ponorogo." "We want the Malaysian government to stop copying our cultural heritage," a member of the Jakarta "Reog" association told the media. Malaysia has adapted this dance, along with an equally popular folksong, "Rasa Sayang" ("Feeling of Love"), as part of Malaysia's international tourism promotion campaign, "Truly Asia" (ref A). Malaysian Ambassador to Indonesia Zainal Abidin Zain addressed protestors November 29 saying that Malaysia never claimed the dance originated in Malaysia but rather that it is now popular in Malaysia.

[1](#)3. (C) Indonesian artists are at the forefront of the latest protests. A popular musician, Dwiki Dharmawan, told us he can understand Malaysia claiming that Malay ethnic culture is shared by the two (Malay-dominated) countries. He claimed, however, that the disputed song and dance are "distinctly" Indonesian. In addition, many Indonesians have asserted to us that "Malaysians don't have their own culture so they steal Indonesia's." "They should find their own identity!" one contact exclaimed.

A WIDESPREAD FEELING

14. (C) The protest was clearly a valve for pent-up emotions.

A prominent editor with a leading magazine, Yuli Ismartono, explained to DepPol/C, "Indonesians are pretty sick and tired (of Malaysia). This (protest) is a backlash regarding treatment of Indonesians by Malaysians, harassing our maids, stealing our islands." (Note: The two countries are disputing the Ligatan and Sipadan islands which are controlled by Malaysia.) The editor was referring to such incidents as the apparent beating of an Indonesian karate coach by Malaysian police in August (ref

B), the detention of the wife of an Indonesian diplomat as an illegal immigrant in October (ref A), and a series of highly publicized cases of abuse against Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia (ref C).

15. (C) Ismartono and other well-known cultural figures told us that Indonesians are also directing their frustration at the GOI for not doing more to protect its own people and culture. Garin Nugroho, filmmaker and IPR activist, told us the government needs "to inventory and declare its cultural heritage" in order to protect it from foreign infringement. The musician Dwiki, however, told DepPol/C the issue is not so much copyrights as pride. He said Malaysia has moved ahead of Indonesia economically so treats Indonesia--including its many Indonesian migrant workers--with "arrogance," breeding resentment.

ROCKY RELATIONS

16. (C) The GOI is under some pressure: the number of incidents involving Malaysia has piled up. The government, however, has been placed in the difficult position of defending national pride while still maintaining cordial

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relations with an important, wealthy neighbor. Malaysia has worked in a positive manner in trying to calm down the situation. In any case, Indonesian sentiment is far from leading to a return of Sukarno-era "Konfrontasi" (a policy of confrontation) and could even be healthy if funneled into constructive dialogue on such issues as protecting Indonesian migrant workers.

HUME